

REMARKS

The specification has been amended to conform sub-headings to US format and to insert a reference to the PCT application and the Japanese priority application. A substitute specification and marked-up copy thereof are enclosed.

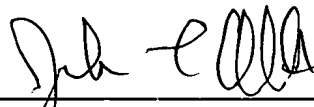
The Abstract has been amended to delete reference numerals.

Claims 12, 13, 19 and 20 have been amended to delete the multiple dependencies.

The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at 202-220-4200 to discuss any matter in connection with this application.

The Office is hereby authorized to charge any fees under 37 C.F.R. 1.16 and 1.17 to the Kenyon & Kenyon Deposit Account No. 11-0600.

Respectfully submitted,



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Dated: 05 January 2006

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DESCRIPTION

POWER OUTPUT APPARATUS AND CONTROL METHOD OF THE SAME

5 ~~Technical Field~~ FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a power output apparatus, a control method of the power output apparatus, and a corresponding automobile.

10 ~~Background Art~~ BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

A proposed power output apparatus has an engine, a planetary gear unit that includes a carrier linked with a crankshaft of the engine and a ring gear linked with a drive shaft mechanically connected to an axle, a first motor that

15 inputs and outputs power from and to a sun gear of the planetary gear unit, a second motor that inputs and outputs power from and to the drive shaft, and a battery that supplies and receives electric power to and from the first motor and the second motor (see, for example, Japanese Patent Laid-Open Gazette No.

20 2001-317385). This prior art power output apparatus sets a power to be output from the engine and a power to be output to the drive shaft, in response to a power demand required by an operator, and controls the engine, the first motor, and the second motor based on the settings. In the event of an abrupt

25 decrease in power demand required by the operator, the control of this prior art power output apparatus estimates the

possibility of a successful response to a subsequent power demand required by the operator. When a failed response is expected, a greater power than a required level corresponding to the operator's subsequent power demand is set to the power to be output from the engine. This aims to enhance the response of power output to the drive shaft to the power demand required by the operator.

~~Disclosure of the Invention~~ SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

10 In this prior art power output apparatus, especially the power output apparatus mounted on a limited space like an automobile, because of the size reduction requirement of the battery, the typical control procedure rapidly lower the power to be output from the engine so as to keep the power balance, in response to an abrupt decrease in power demand required by the operator. The engine is not capable of varying its drive point as quickly as an electric device like a motor. There is accordingly fear that the battery is overcharged, before the accomplished variation of the drive point. One possible measure against the potential overcharge of the battery shuts off the fuel supply to the engine. The abrupt shutoff of the fuel supply, however, leads to a drastic change of the engine torque and may thus cause a torque shock. The abrupt shutoff of the fuel supply may also cause a poor response to the operator's subsequent requirement.

A power output apparatus of the invention is equipped

with an electric power-mechanical power input-output unit that maintains or varies the driving state of an internal combustion engine and outputs at least part of power from the internal combustion engine to a drive shaft through inputs and outputs
5 of electric power and mechanical power. The power output apparatus, a control method of the power output apparatus, and a corresponding automobile of the invention aim to prevent a potential overcharge of an accumulator like a secondary battery in response to an abrupt decrease in power demand required by
10 an operator. The invention also aims to ensure a smooth variation in driving state of the internal combustion engine according to the state of charge of the accumulator in response to an abrupt decrease in power demand required by the operator. The invention further aims to reduce a potential torque shock
15 due to an abrupt decrease in power demand required by the operator. The invention also aims to enhance a response to the operator's subsequent requirement after an abrupt decrease in power demand required by the operator.

In order to attain at least part of the above aims, the
20 power output apparatus, a control method of the power output apparatus, and a corresponding automobile are constructed as follows.

The present invention is directed to a power output apparatus that outputs power to a drive shaft, the power output
25 apparatus including: an internal combustion engine; an electric power-mechanical power input-output unit that is

linked with an output shaft of the internal combustion engine and with the drive shaft to maintain or vary a driving state of the internal combustion engine and to output at least part of power from the internal combustion engine to the drive shaft through inputs and outputs of electric power and mechanical power; a motor that is capable of inputting and outputting power from and to the drive shaft; a secondary battery that is capable of supplying and receiving electric power to and from the electric power-mechanical power input-output unit and the motor; an input restriction setting module that sets an input restriction of the secondary battery; a charge-discharge electric power measurement module that measures a charge-discharge electric power used to charge the secondary battery or obtained by discharging the secondary battery; a power demand setting module that sets a power demand required to the drive shaft, in response to an operator's manipulation; a driving state varying mode changeover module that, in response to setting of an abruptly decreasing power demand by the power demand setting module, selects a driving state varying mode to vary the driving state of the internal combustion engine, based on the charge-discharge electric power measured by the charge-discharge electric power measurement module and the input restriction set by the input restriction setting module; and a controller that controls the internal combustion engine, the electric power-mechanical power input-output unit, and the motor to ensure a variation in driving state of the internal

combustion engine in the selected driving state varying mode and output of a power corresponding to the setting of the power demand to the drive shaft.

In response to an abrupt decrease in power demand set
5 by the operator's manipulation, the power output apparatus of the invention selects the driving state varying mode of the internal combustion engine, based on the measured charge-discharge electric power, which is used to charge the secondary battery or is obtained by discharging the secondary
10 battery, and the setting of the input restriction of the secondary battery. The power output apparatus controls the internal combustion engine, the electric power-mechanical power input-output unit, and the motor to vary the driving state of the internal combustion engine in the selected driving state
15 varying mode and to output a power corresponding to the setting of the power demand to the drive shaft. Such control smoothly varies the driving state of the internal combustion engine according to the state of charge of the secondary battery. This arrangement effectively prevents the secondary battery from
20 being overcharged, while reducing a potential torque shock due to an abrupt decrease in power demand. The adequate selection of the driving state varying mode of the internal combustion engine enhances the response to the operator's subsequent requirement. Here setting of an abruptly decreasing power
25 demand may be setting of a power demand to apply a braking force to the drive shaft.

In one preferable application of the power output apparatus of the invention, the driving state varying mode changeover module selects an ordinary state varying mode to gradually vary the driving state of the internal combustion engine when the measured charge-discharge electric power is less than a predetermined first electric power set on the basis of the input restriction, the driving state varying mode changeover module selecting an independent state varying mode to idle the internal combustion engine at a specified revolution speed without torque output and thereby vary the driving state of the internal combustion engine when the measured charge-discharge electric power is not less than the predetermined first electric power but is less than a predetermined second electric power set on the basis of the input restriction, the driving state varying mode changeover module selecting a fuel supply shutoff state varying mode to shut off fuel supply to the internal combustion engine and thereby vary the driving state of the internal combustion engine when the measured charge-discharge electric power is not less than the predetermined second electric power. The control of varying the driving state of the internal combustion engine in the ordinary state varying mode effectively reduces a potential torque shock and enhances a response to the operator's subsequent requirement. The control of varying the driving state of the internal combustion engine in the independent state varying mode effectively prevents overcharge of the secondary

battery, while ensuring some reduction of a potential torque shock and a relatively quick response to the operator's subsequent requirement. The control of varying the driving state of the internal combustion engine in the fuel supply shutoff state varying mode effectively prevents deterioration of the battery due to potential overcharge of the battery. Here, the predetermined second electric power may be set to be a lower level or a higher level than the input restriction. The predetermined first electric power may be set to be a lower level than the input restriction.

In another preferable application of the power output apparatus of the invention, the driving state varying mode changeover module selects the driving state varying mode of the internal combustion engine, based on a degree of a variation in measured charge-discharge electric power that has reached a predetermined first electric power set on the basis of the input restriction. This application estimates the charge-discharge electric power in the immediate future, based on the degree of the variation in observed charge-discharge electric power. The driving state of the internal combustion engine is thus varied according to the estimated charge-discharge electric power. This arrangement more effectively prevents overcharge of the accumulator. In this application, the driving state varying mode changeover module may select an ordinary state varying mode to gradually vary the driving state of the internal combustion engine when the

degree of the variation in measured charge-discharge electric power is less than a predetermined first level, while selecting an independent state varying mode to idle the internal combustion engine at a specified revolution speed without torque output and thereby vary the driving state of the internal combustion engine when the degree of the variation in measured charge-discharge electric power is not less than the predetermined first level but is less than a predetermined second level, and selecting a fuel supply shutoff state varying mode to shut off fuel supply to the internal combustion engine and thereby vary the driving state of the internal combustion engine when the degree of the variation in measured charge-discharge electric power is not less than the predetermined second level. The control of varying the driving state of the internal combustion engine in the ordinary state varying mode effectively reduces a potential torque shock and enhances a response to the operator's subsequent requirement. The control of varying the driving state of the internal combustion engine in the independent state varying mode effectively prevents overcharge of the secondary battery, while ensuring some reduction of a potential torque shock and a relatively quick response to the operator's subsequent requirement. The control of varying the driving state of the internal combustion engine in the fuel supply shutoff state varying mode effectively prevents deterioration of the battery due to potential overcharge of the battery. As one modified

structure, the driving state varying mode changeover module may adopt the fuel supply shutoff state varying mode, regardless of the selected driving state varying mode when the measured charge-discharge electric power has reached the predetermined first electric power, on the condition that the measured charge-discharge electric power is not less than a predetermined second electric power, which is set on the basis of the input restriction to be greater than the predetermined first electric power. This arrangement more effectively prevents overcharge of the accumulator. Here, the predetermined second electric power may be set to be a lower level or a higher level than the input restriction. The predetermined first electric power may be set to be a lower level than the input restriction.

In the power output apparatus of the invention, the electric power-mechanical power input-output unit may include: a three-shaft power input-output assembly that is connected with three shafts, that is, the output shaft of the internal combustion engine, the drive shaft, and a third shaft, and specifies input and output of power from and to one residual shaft among the three shafts, based on powers input and output from and to two shafts among the three shafts; and a generator that inputs and outputs power from and to the third shaft. In the power output apparatus of the invention, the electric power-mechanical power input-output unit may include a pair-rotor generator having a first rotor, which is linked with

the output shaft of the internal combustion engine, and a second rotor, which is linked with the drive shaft and rotates relative to the first rotor, the pair-rotor generator outputting at least part of the power from the internal combustion engine to the drive shaft through input and output of electric power by electromagnetic interaction between the first rotor and the second rotor.

The present invention is also directed to an automobile including: an internal combustion engine; an electric power-mechanical power input-output unit that is linked with an output shaft of the internal combustion engine and with a drive shaft connecting to an axle to maintain or vary a driving state of the internal combustion engine and to output at least part of power from the internal combustion engine to the drive shaft through inputs and outputs of electric power and mechanical power; a motor that is capable of inputting and outputting power from and to the drive shaft; a secondary battery that is capable of supplying and receiving electric power to and from the electric power-mechanical power input-output unit and the motor; an input restriction setting module that sets an input restriction of the secondary battery; a charge-discharge electric power measurement module that measures a charge-discharge electric power used to charge the secondary battery or obtained by discharging the secondary battery; a power demand setting module that sets a power demand required to the drive shaft, in response to an operator's

manipulation; a driving state varying mode changeover module that, in response to setting of an abruptly decreasing power demand by the power demand setting module, selects a driving state varying mode to vary the driving state of the internal combustion engine, based on the charge-discharge electric power measured by the charge-discharge electric power measurement module and the input restriction set by the input restriction setting module; and a controller that controls the internal combustion engine, the electric power-mechanical power input-output unit, and the motor to ensure a variation in driving state of the internal combustion engine in the selected driving state varying mode and output of a power corresponding to the setting of the power demand to the drive shaft. The automobile of the invention may be equipped with the power output apparatus of the invention having any of the above arrangements, where an axle is linked with the drive shaft.

The automobile of the invention has the power output apparatus of the invention in any of the above applications. The automobile of the invention accordingly exerts the similar effects to those of the power output apparatus of the invention discussed above: for example, ensuring a smooth variation in driving state of the internal combustion engine according to the state of charge of the secondary battery; preventing overcharge of the secondary battery; reducing a potential torque shock due to an abrupt decrease in power demand; and

enhancing the response to the driver's subsequent requirement in the adequately selected driving state varying mode of the internal combustion engine.

The present invention is also directed to a control method
5 of a power output apparatus that outputs power to a drive shaft, the power output apparatus including: an internal combustion engine; an electric power-mechanical power input-output unit that is linked with an output shaft of the internal combustion engine and with the drive shaft to maintain or vary a driving
10 state of the internal combustion engine and to output at least part of power from the internal combustion engine to the drive shaft through inputs and outputs of electric power and mechanical power; a motor that is capable of inputting and outputting power from and to the drive shaft; and a secondary
15 battery that is capable of supplying and receiving electric power to and from the electric power-mechanical power input-output unit and the motor, the control method including the steps of: (a) setting an input restriction of the secondary battery; (b) measuring a charge-discharge electric power used
20 to charge the secondary battery or obtained by discharging the secondary battery; (c) setting a power demand required to the drive shaft, in response to an operator's manipulation; (d) in response to setting of an abruptly decreasing power demand by the step (c), selecting a driving state varying mode to vary
25 the driving state of the internal combustion engine, based on the measured charge-discharge electric power and the setting

of the input restriction; and (e) controlling the internal combustion engine, the electric power-mechanical power input-output unit, and the motor to ensure a variation in driving state of the internal combustion engine in the selected driving state varying mode and output of a power corresponding to the setting of the power demand to the drive shaft.

In response to an abrupt decrease in power demand set by the operator's manipulation, the control method of the power output apparatus of the invention selects the driving state varying mode of the internal combustion engine, based on the measured charge-discharge electric power, which is used to charge the secondary battery or is obtained by discharging the secondary battery, and the setting of the input restriction of the secondary battery. The method controls the internal combustion engine, the electric power-mechanical power input-output unit, and the motor to vary the driving state of the internal combustion engine in the selected driving state varying mode and to output a power corresponding to the setting of the power demand to the drive shaft. Such control smoothly varies the driving state of the internal combustion engine according to the state of charge of the secondary battery. This arrangement effectively prevents the secondary battery from being overcharged, while reducing a potential torque shock due to an abrupt decrease in power demand. The adequate selection of the driving state varying mode of the internal combustion engine enhances the response to the operator's subsequent

requirement. Here setting of an abruptly decreasing power demand may be setting of a power demand to apply a braking force to the drive shaft.

In one preferable application of the control method of the invention, the step (d) selects an ordinary state varying mode to gradually vary the driving state of the internal combustion engine when the measured charge-discharge electric power is less than a predetermined first electric power set on the basis of the input restriction, the step (d) selecting an independent state varying mode to idle the internal combustion engine at a specified revolution speed without torque output and thereby vary the driving state of the internal combustion engine when the measured charge-discharge electric power is not less than the predetermined first electric power but is less than a predetermined second electric power set on the basis of the input restriction, the step (d) selecting a fuel supply shutoff state varying mode to shut off fuel supply to the internal combustion engine and thereby vary the driving state of the internal combustion engine when the measured charge-discharge electric power is not less than the predetermined second electric power. The control of varying the driving state of the internal combustion engine in the ordinary state varying mode effectively reduces a potential torque shock and enhances a response to the operator's subsequent requirement. The control of varying the driving state of the internal combustion engine in the independent state

varying mode effectively prevents overcharge of the secondary battery, while ensuring some reduction of a potential torque shock and a relatively quick response to the operator's subsequent requirement. The control of varying the driving
5 state of the internal combustion engine in the fuel supply shutoff state varying mode effectively prevents deterioration of the battery due to potential overcharge of the battery.

In another preferable application of the control method of the invention, the step (d) selects an ordinary state varying
10 mode to gradually vary the driving state of the internal combustion engine when a degree of a variation in measured charge-discharge electric power, which has reached a predetermined first electric power set on the basis of the input restriction, is less than a predetermined first level, the step
15 (d) selecting an independent state varying mode to idle the internal combustion engine at a specified revolution speed without torque output and thereby vary the driving state of the internal combustion engine when the degree of the variation in measured charge-discharge electric power is not less than
20 the predetermined first level but is less than a predetermined second level, the step (d) selecting a fuel supply shutoff state varying mode to shut off fuel supply to the internal combustion engine and thereby vary the driving state of the internal combustion engine when the degree of the variation in measured
25 charge-discharge electric power is not less than the predetermined second level. This application estimates the

charge-discharge electric power in the immediate future, based on the degree of the variation in observed charge-discharge electric power. The driving state of the internal combustion engine is thus varied according to the estimated
5 charge-discharge electric power. This arrangement more effectively prevents overcharge of the accumulator.

Brief Description of the Drawings

Fig. 1 schematically illustrates the construction of a
10 hybrid vehicle 20 in one embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 2 is a flowchart showing a speed reduction control routine executed by a hybrid electronic control unit 70;

Fig. 3 shows variations in input restriction W_{in} and output restriction W_{out} against battery temperature T_b of a
15 battery 50;

Fig. 4 shows variations in correction coefficients of the input restriction W_{in} and the output restriction W_{out} against the state of charge (SOC) of the battery 50;

Fig. 5 shows an example of a torque demand setting map;

20 Fig. 6 shows a process of setting target torque T_e^* corresponding to target revolution speed N_e^* on a driving line of an engine 22;

Fig. 7 is an alignment chart showing a dynamic relation with respect to rotational elements in a power distribution
25 integration mechanism 30;

Fig. 8 is a flowchart showing a speed reduction control routine in one modified structure;

Fig. 9 schematically illustrates the construction of a hybrid vehicle 20 in one modified structure; and

5 Fig. 10 schematically illustrates the construction of a hybrid vehicle 20 in another modified structure.

~~Best Modes of Carrying Out the Invention~~ DETAILED DESCRIPTION

One mode of carrying out the invention is discussed below
10 as a preferred embodiment. Fig. 1 schematically illustrates the construction of a hybrid vehicle 20 with a power output apparatus mounted thereon in one embodiment of the invention. As illustrated, the hybrid vehicle 20 of the embodiment includes an engine 22, a three shaft-type power distribution integration
15 mechanism 30 that is linked with a crankshaft 26 functioning as an output shaft of the engine 22 via a damper 28, a motor MG1 that is linked with the power distribution integration mechanism 30 and is capable of generating electric power, a
20 reduction gear 35 that is attached to a ring gear shaft 32a functioning as a drive shaft connected with the power distribution integration mechanism 30, another motor MG2 that is linked with the reduction gear 35, and a hybrid electronic control unit 70 that controls the whole power output apparatus.

The engine 22 is an internal combustion engine that
25 consumes a hydrocarbon fuel, such as gasoline or light oil, to output power and is under control of an engine electronic

control unit (hereafter referred to as engine ECU) 24. The engine ECU 24 receives input signals from various sensors detecting the driving conditions of the engine 22 and carries out operation control including fuel injection control, ignition control, and intake air flow regulation. The engine ECU 24 communicates with the hybrid electronic control unit 70 and receives control signals from the hybrid electronic control unit 70 to control the operations of the engine 22, while outputting data regarding the driving conditions of the engine 22 to the hybrid electronic control unit 70 according to the requirements.

The power distribution and integration mechanism 30 has a sun gear 31 that is an external gear, a ring gear 32 that is an internal gear and is arranged concentrically with the sun gear 31, multiple pinion gears 33 that engage with the sun gear 31 and with the ring gear 32, and a carrier 34 that holds the multiple pinion gears 33 in such a manner as to allow free revolution thereof and free rotation thereof on the respective axes. Namely the power distribution and integration mechanism 30 is constructed as a planetary gear mechanism that allows for differential motions of the sun gear 31, the ring gear 32, and the carrier 34 as rotational elements. The carrier 34, the sun gear 31, and the ring gear 32 in the power distribution and integration mechanism 30 are respectively coupled with the crankshaft 26 of the engine 22, the motor MG1, and the reduction gear 35 via the ring gear shaft 32a. While the motor MG1

functions as a generator, the power output from the engine 22 and input through the carrier 34 is distributed into the sun gear 31 and the ring gear 32 according to the gear ratio. While the motor MG1 functions as a motor, on the other hand, the power
5 output from the engine 22 and input through the carrier 34 is combined with the power output from the motor MG1 and input through the sun gear 31 and the composite power is output to the ring gear 32. The power output to the ring gear 32 is finally transmitted to the driving wheels 63a, 63b via the gear
10 mechanism 60 and differential gear 62 from ring gear shaft 32a.

Both of the motors MG1 and MG2 are constructed as known synchronous generator motors, which are driven as an electric generator as well as an electric motor. The motors MG1 and MG2 transmit electric power from and to a battery 50 via
15 inverters 41 and 42. A power line 54 connecting the inverters 41 and 42 with the battery 50 includes a positive terminal bus line and a negative terminal bus line shared by the two inverters 41 and 42. This arrangement enables the electric power generated by one of the motors MG1 and MG2 to be consumed by
20 the other motor. The battery 50 is charged with the excess electric power of the motor MG1 or the motor MG2 and is discharged to supplement the insufficient electric power of the motor MG1 or the motor MG2. The battery 50 is neither charged not discharged when there is an electric power balance by the motors
25 MG1 and MG2. The motors MG1 and MG2 are both driven and controlled by a motor electronic control unit (hereinafter

referred to as motor ECU) 40. The motor ECU 40 receives signals required for driving and controlling the motors MG1 and MG2, for example, signals from rotational position detection sensors 43 and 44 that detect the rotational positions of rotors in the motors MG1 and MG2 and values of phase electric currents supplied to the motors MG1 and MG2 and detected by non-illustrated electric current sensors. The motor ECU 40 outputs switching control signals to the inverters 41 and 42. The motor ECU 40 communicates with the hybrid electronic control unit 70 and drives and controls the motors MG1 and MG2 in response to control signals from the hybrid electronic control unit 70 while outputting data regarding the driving conditions of the motors MG1 and MG2 to the hybrid electronic control unit 70 according to the requirements.

The battery 50 is controlled by a battery electronic control unit (hereinafter referred to as battery ECU) 52. The battery ECU 52 receives signals required for controlling the battery 50, for example, a value of inter-terminal voltage V_b measured by a voltage sensor 51a disposed between terminals of the battery 50, a value of charge discharge electric current I_b measured by an electric current sensor 51b attached to the power line 54 connecting with an output terminal of the battery 50, and a battery temperature T_b measured by a temperature sensor 51c attached to the battery 50. The battery ECU 52 outputs data regarding the conditions of the battery 50 to the hybrid electronic control unit 70 via communication according

to the requirements. The battery ECU 52 computes a state of charge (SOC) from an accumulated value of the charge discharge electric current I_b measured by the electric current sensor 51b for controlling the battery 50.

5 The hybrid electronic control unit 70 is constructed as a microprocessor including a CPU 72, a ROM 74 that stores processing programs, a RAM 76 that temporarily stores data, and a non-illustrated input-output port, and a non-illustrated communication port. The hybrid electronic control unit 70
10 receives various inputs via the input port: an ignition signal from an ignition switch 80, a gearshift position SP from a gearshift position sensor 82 that detects the current position of a gearshift lever 81, an accelerator opening Acc from an accelerator pedal position sensor 84 that measures a step-on
15 amount of an accelerator pedal 83, a brake pedal position BP from a brake pedal position sensor 86 that measures a step-on amount of a brake pedal 85, and a vehicle speed V from a vehicle speed sensor 88. The hybrid electronic control unit 70 communicates with the engine ECU 24, the motor ECU 40, and the
20 battery ECU 52 via the communication port to transmit diverse control signals and data to and from the engine ECU 24, the motor ECU 40, and the battery ECU 52, as mentioned previously.

The hybrid vehicle 20 of the embodiment thus constructed calculates a required torque, which is to be output to the ring
25 gear shaft 32a or the drive shaft, based on the accelerator opening Acc corresponding to the driver's step-on amount of

the accelerator pedal 83 and the vehicle speed V. The engine 22 and the motors MG1 and MG2 are under operation control to enable power corresponding to the calculated required torque to be actually output to the ring gear shaft 32a. The operation

5 control of the engine 22 and the motors MG1 and MG2 has multiple modes, a torque conversion drive mode, a charge-discharge drive mode, and a motor drive mode. In the torque conversion drive mode, the engine 22 is under operation control to output a power equivalent to the required power. The motors MG1 and MG2 are

10 driven and controlled to cause the total power output from the engine 22 to be subjected to the torque conversion by means of the power distribution and integration mechanism 30 and the motors MG1 and MG2 and to be output to the ring gear shaft 32a. In the charge-discharge drive mode, the engine 22 is under

15 operation control to output a power equivalent to the sum of the required power and an electric power used for charging and discharging the battery 50. The motors MG1 and MG2 are driven and controlled to cause all or part of the power output from the engine 22 with a charge or a discharge of the battery 50

20 to be subjected to the torque conversion by means of the power distribution and integration mechanism 30 and the motors MG1 and MG2 and to be output as the required power to the ring gear shaft 32a. In the motor drive mode, the operation of the engine 22 is at a stop, while the motor MG2 is driven and controlled

25 to output a power equivalent to the required power to the ring gear shaft 32a.

The following describes the operations of the hybrid vehicle 20 of the embodiment constructed as discussed above, especially the operation of speed reduction in response to release of the accelerator pedal 83. Fig. 2 is a flowchart showing a speed reduction control routine executed by the hybrid electronic control unit 70. This routine is carried out repeatedly at preset time intervals (for example, at every 8 msec) after release of the accelerator.

When the speed reduction control routine starts, the CPU 72 of the hybrid electronic control unit 70 first inputs various data required for control, that is, the accelerator opening Acc from the accelerator pedal position sensor 84, the brake pedal position BP from the brake pedal position sensor 86, the vehicle speed V from the vehicle speed sensor 88, a revolution speed Ne of the engine 22, revolution speeds Nm1 and Nm2 of the motors MG1 and MG2, charge-discharge electric power Wb of the battery 50, and input and output restrictions Win and Wout of the battery 50 (step S100). The revolution speed Ne of the engine 22 is calculated based on a signal from a non-illustrated crank position sensor attached to the crankshaft 26 and is input from the engine ECU 24 via communication. The revolution speeds Nm1 and Nm2 of the motors MG1 and MG2 are computed from the rotational positions of rotors in the motors MG1 and MG2 detected by the rotational position detection sensors 43 and 44 and are input from the motor ECU 40 via communication. The charge-discharge electric power Wb of the battery 50 is

calculated as the product of the average of voltage V_b of the battery 50 measured by the voltage sensor 51a and the average of charge-discharge current I_b measured by the current sensor 51b in a preset time period (for example, in 24 msec) and is input from the battery ECU 52 via communication. Using the average of voltage V_b and the average of charge-discharge current I_b in the preset time period desirably stabilizes the charge-discharge electric power W_b . The input and output restrictions W_{in} and W_{out} of the battery 50 are set according to the battery temperature T_b of the battery 50 measured by the temperature sensor 51c and the state of charge (SOC) of the battery 50 and are input from the battery ECU 52 via communication. One concrete procedure specifies reference values of the input and output restrictions W_{in} and W_{out} based on the observed battery temperature T_b , determines an input restriction correction coefficient and an output restriction correction coefficient based on the state of charge (SOC) of the battery 50, and multiplies the specified reference values of the input and output restrictions W_{in} and W_{out} by the respective correction coefficients to set the input and output restrictions W_{in} and W_{out} of the battery 50. Fig. 3 shows variations in input restriction W_{in} and output restriction W_{out} against the battery temperature T_b . Fig. 4 shows variations in correction coefficients of the input restriction W_{in} and the output restriction W_{out} against the state of charge (SOC) of the battery 50.

After the input of these data, the routine sets a torque demand Tr^* to be output to the ring gear shaft 32a as the drive shaft linked with the drive wheels 63a and 63b as the torque required for the vehicle, based on the inputs of the accelerator opening Acc , the brake pedal position BP , and the vehicle speed V (step S110). In the structure of this embodiment, variations in torque demand Tr^* against the accelerator opening Acc and the vehicle speed V are specified in advance and stored as a torque demand setting map in the ROM 74. The procedure of the embodiment reads and sets the torque demand Tr^* corresponding to the given accelerator opening Acc and the given vehicle speed V from the stored torque demand setting map. Fig. 5 shows an example of the torque demand setting map. This speed reduction control routine is executed in the accelerator-off state. The torque demand Tr^* is accordingly set as a braking torque (a negative torque), based on either of the accelerator opening Acc set equal to '0' or the brake pedal position BP .

After setting the torque demand Tr^* , the routine subtracts predetermined values $W1$ and $W2$ from the input restriction Win to specify an idling reference value $Wr1$ and a fuel supply shutoff reference value $Wr2$ (step S120). The predetermined value $W1$ represents some surplus electric power of the battery 50 not to attain a relatively slow reduction in the revolution speed Ne of the engine 22 with power generation by the motor $MG1$. The predetermined value $W2$ represents an extremely small surplus electric power of the battery 50.

Positive values may be set to both the predetermined values $W1$ and $W2$, in the case where the setting of the input restriction Win does not take into account the margin of the battery 50 at all. In the case where the setting of the input restriction Win takes into account the margin of the battery 50, on the other hand, negative values may be set to only the predetermined value $W2$ or to both the predetermined values $W1$ and $W2$.

After specification of the idling reference value $Wr1$ and the fuel supply shutoff reference value $Wr2$, the routine compares the input charge-discharge electric power Wb with the specified fuel supply shutoff reference value $Wr2$ (step S130). When the charge-discharge electric power Wb is less than the fuel supply shutoff reference value $Wr2$, the routine sets a value obtained by subtraction of a predetermined revolution speed Nrt from the input revolution speed Ne of the engine 22 to a target revolution speed Ne^* of the engine 22 to lower the revolution speed Ne of the engine 22 by the rate process (step S140). The routine then compares the input charge-discharge electric power Wb with the specified idling reference value $Wr1$ (step S150).

When the charge-discharge electric power Wb is less than the idling reference value $Wr1$, the routine determines that the battery 50 has a sufficient margin and sets a target torque Te^* of the engine 22, based on the setting of the target revolution speed Ne^* (step S160). In this embodiment, the target torque Te^* is set as a torque corresponding to the target

revolution speed Ne^* of an efficient drive point on a driving line for efficiently driving the engine 22. The process of setting the target torque Te^* corresponding to the target revolution speed Ne^* on the driving line of the engine 22 is shown in Fig. 6.

After setting the target revolution speed Ne^* and the target torque Te^* , the routine calculates a target revolution speed $Nm1^*$ of the motor MG1 from the setting of the target revolution speed Ne^* , the revolution speed Nr ($= Nm2/Gr$) of the ring gear shaft 32a, and the gear ratio p of the power distribution integration mechanism 30 according to Equation (1) given below, and calculates a torque command $Tm1^*$ of the motor MG1 from the calculated target revolution speed $Nm1^*$ and the current revolution speed $Nm1$ of the motor MG1 according to Equation (2) given below (step S170). Equation (1) shows a dynamic relation of the rotational elements in the power distribution integration mechanism 30. Fig. 7 is an alignment chart showing a dynamic relation between the revolution speed and the torque with respect to the rotational elements in the power distribution integration mechanism 30. An axis S shows the revolution speed of the sun gear 31 that is equal to the revolution speed $Nm1$ of the motor MG1. An axis C shows the revolution speed of the carrier 34 that is equal to the revolution speed Ne of the engine 22. An axis R shows the revolution speed Nr of the ring gear 32 that is obtained by multiplying the revolution speed $Nm2$ of the motor MG2 by the

gear ratio Gr of the reduction gear 35. Equation (1) is easily derived from this alignment chart. Two thick arrows on the axis R respectively represent a torque acting on the ring gear shaft 32a as the torque Te^* output from the engine 22 is transmitted via the power distribution integration mechanism 30 while the engine 22 is steadily driven at a specific drive point defined by the target torque Te^* and the target revolution speed Ne^* , and a torque acting on the ring gear shaft 32a as the torque $Tm2^*$ output from the motor MG2 is transmitted via the reduction gear 35. In the course of speed reduction, the torque $Tm2^*$ output from the motor MG2 has a negative direction (a downward direction in the drawing). Both the motors MG1 and MG2 accordingly function as generators. Equation (2) shows a relation in feedback control to rotate the motor MG1 at the target revolution speed $Nm1^*$. In Equation (2), $k1$ in the second term on the right side represents a gain of a proportional term and $k2$ in the third term on the right side represents a gain of an integral term.

$$Nm1^* \square Ne^* \square (1 + \rho) / \rho \square Nm2 / (Gr \square \rho) \quad (1)$$

$$Tm1^* \square Previous \ Tm1^* \square k1 (Nm1^* \square Nm1) \square k2 \int (Nm1^* \square Nm1) dt \quad (2)$$

After calculation of the target revolution speed $Nm1^*$ and the torque command $Tm1^*$ of the motor MG1, the routine divides a difference between the input restriction Win of the battery and a generated power (power consumption) of the motor MG1,

which is the product of the calculated torque command T_{m1}^* of the motor MG1 and the current revolution speed N_{m1} of the motor MG1, by the current revolution speed N_{m2} of the motor MG2 according to Equation (3) given below to calculate a torque limit T_{min} as an allowable lower limit torque output from the motor MG2 (step S180). The routine also calculates a tentative motor torque T_{m2tmp} as a torque to be output from the motor MG2, from the torque demand Tr^* , the torque command T_{m1}^* , and the gear ratio ρ of the power distribution integration mechanism according to Equation (4) given below (step S190), and sets the greater between the calculated torque limit T_{min} and the calculated tentative motor torque T_{m2tmp} to a torque command T_{m2}^* of the motor MG2 (step S200). Setting the torque command T_{m2}^* of the motor MG2 in this manner enables the torque demand Tr^* (braking torque), which is to be output to the ring gear shaft 32a as the drive shaft, to be set as a limited torque within the range of the input restriction W_{in} of the battery. Equation (4) is readily derived from the alignment chart of Fig. 7 described above.

20

$$T_{min} = (W_{in} \times T_{m1}^* \times N_{m1}) / N_{m2} \quad (3)$$

$$T_{m2tmp} = (Tr^* \times T_{m1}^* / \rho) / Gr \quad (4)$$

After setting the target revolution speed Ne^* and the target torque Te^* of the engine 22 and the torque commands T_{m1}^* and T_{m2}^* of the motors MG1 and MG2, the routine sends the target

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revolution speed Ne^* and the target torque Te^* of the engine 22 to the engine ECU 24 and the torque commands $Tm1^*$ and $Tm2^*$ of the motors MG1 and MG2 to the motor ECU 40 (step S210), before being terminated. The engine ECU 24 receives the target
5 revolution speed Ne^* and the target torque Te^* and carries out fuel injection control and ignition control of the engine 22 to drive the engine 22 at a drive point defined by the target revolution speed Ne^* and the target torque Te^* . The motor ECU 40 receives the torque commands $Tm1^*$ and $Tm2^*$ and carries out
10 switching control of switching elements included in the inverters 41 and 42 to drive the motor MG1 with the torque command $Tm1^*$ and to drive the motor MG2 with the torque command $Tm2^*$.

In the continuing state where the charge-discharge electric power Wb is less than the idling reference value Wrl ,
15 the routine sets the target revolution speed Ne^* , which is gradually lowered by the rate process, and the corresponding target torque Te^* (steps S140 and S160), as described above. The engine 22 is then controlled to be driven at the drive point defined by the settings of the target revolution speed Ne^* and
20 the target torque Te^* . The motor MG1 is controlled to output an offset torque that cancels the torque acting on the sun gear 31 in response to the output torque of the engine 22 and makes the revolution speed Ne of the engine 22 approach to the target revolution speed Ne^* . The motor MG2 is controlled to output
25 a torque that is computed by dividing the sum of the torque demand Tr^* (braking torque) and an offset torque for canceling

the torque acting on the ring gear shaft 32a in response to the output torque of the motor MG1 by the gear ratio G_r of the reduction gear 35 and is limited in the range of the input restriction W_{in} . The revolution speed N_e of the engine 22 thus
5 gradually decreases with power generation of the motor MG1. The battery 50 is accordingly charged with the generated power of the MG1 and with the regenerative power of the motor MG2. In this speed reduction state, the control procedure gradually lowers the revolution speed N_e of the engine 22 with the torque
10 output from the engine 22. Such control ensures a prompt torque output to the ring gear shaft 32a as the drive shaft, in response to the driver's sudden step-on action of the accelerator pedal 83. This arrangement accordingly attains a quick response to the driver's action.

15 When it is determined at step S150 that the charge-discharge electric power W_b of the battery 50 is not less than the idling reference value W_{r1} , the routine determines that the battery 50 has a slight margin and transmits a control signal to the engine ECU 24 to idle the engine 22 at the target
20 revolution speed N_e^* (step S220). The routine then calculates the target revolution speed N_{m1}^* of the motor MG1 from the setting of the target revolution speed N_e^* , the revolution speed N_r ($= N_{m2}/G_r$) of the ring gear shaft 32a, and the gear ratio p of the power distribution integration mechanism 30 according
25 to Equation (1) given above, and calculates the torque command T_{m1}^* of the motor MG1 from the calculated target revolution

speed N_{m1}^* and the current revolution speed N_{m1} of the motor MG1 according to Equation (2) given above (step S170). In this state, only a small torque is required to be output from the motor MG1, since the engine 22 is controlled to output the torque or to be driven at the target revolution speed N_e^* . A smaller setting is thus sufficient for the gain k_1 of the proportional term (the second term on the right side of Equation (2)) in the relation in feedback control used to set the torque command T_{m1}^* , compared with the state where the charge-discharge electric power W_b is less than the idling reference value W_{r1} . The procedure of this embodiment accordingly sets a smaller value to the gain k_1 of the proportional term for the control to idle the engine 22. The routine subsequently executes the processing of and after step S180.

15 In the continuing state where the charge-discharge electric power W_b is not less than the idling reference value W_{r1} but is less than the fuel supply shutoff reference value W_{r2} , each cycle of the speed reduction control routine subtracts the predetermined revolution speed N_{rt} from the observed
20 revolution speed N_e of the engine 22 at the time to set the target revolution speed N_e^* of the engine 22 (step S140). The engine 22 is then controlled to be idled at the setting of the target revolution speed N_e^* (step S220). The motor MG1 is controlled to output a relatively small level of the torque
25 command T_{m1}^* , which is set with the small gain k_1 to make the revolution speed N_e of the engine 22 approach to the target

revolution speed N_e^* . The motor MG2 is controlled to output a torque that is computed by dividing the sum of the torque demand Tr^* (braking torque) and an offset torque for canceling a relatively small level of the torque acting on the ring gear shaft 32a in response to the output torque of the motor MG1 by the gear ratio Gr of the reduction gear 35 and is limited in the range of the input restriction Win . The revolution speed N_e of the engine 22 thus gradually decreases with slight power generation of the motor MG1. The battery 50 is accordingly charged with the slight generated power of the MG1 and with the regenerative power of the motor MG2. In this speed reduction state, the control procedure gradually lowers the revolution speed N_e of the engine 22, while idling the engine 22. Such control ensures a relatively prompt torque output to the ring gear shaft 32a as the drive shaft, in response to the driver's sudden step-on action of the accelerator pedal 83, although the torque output response is not so prompt as that in the state of gradually lowering the revolution speed N_e with the torque output of the engine 22. This arrangement accordingly attains a relatively quick response to the driver's action.

When it is determined at step S130 that the charge-discharge electric power W_b is not less than the fuel supply shutoff reference value Wr_2 , the routine determines that the battery 50 has only an extremely small margin and transmits a control signal to the engine ECU 24 to shut off the fuel supply

to the engine 22 (step S230). The routine then sets a value '0' to the torque command T_{m1}^* of the motor MG1 (step S240) and executes the processing of and after step S180. Since the torque command T_{m1}^* is set equal to 0, the processing of and
5 after step S180 sets the value that is obtained by dividing the torque demand Tr^* by the gear ratio Gr of the reduction gear 35 and is limited in the range of the input restriction Win to the torque command T_{m2}^* of the motor MG2. In this state, the fuel supply to the engine 22 is abruptly shut off. This
10 causes a slight torque shock at a level that does not adversely affect the driving operations of the vehicle. Such a slight torque shock is unavoidable for protection of the battery 50.

In the continuing state where the charge-discharge electric power Wb is not less than the fuel supply shutoff
15 reference value $Wr2$, the shutoff of fuel supply to the engine 22 continues. The engine 22 accordingly stops its operation, and the motor MG1 is controlled to output no torque. The motor MG2 is controlled to output the torque that is computed by dividing the torque demand Tr^* (braking torque) by the gear
20 ratio Gr of the reduction gear 35 and is limited in the range of the input restriction Win . The battery 50 is accordingly charged with only the regenerative power of the motor MG2. In this speed reduction state, in response to the driver's sudden step-on action of the accelerator pedal 83, such control ensures
25 a quick torque output responding to the torque demand Tr^* of a level suppliable by the motor MG2. The fuel injection control

and the ignition control of the engine 22 are required, however, to fulfill the torque demand Tr^* over the suppliable level by the motor MG2. The resulting delay of torque output is unavoidable for protection of the battery 50.

5 The input restriction Win of the battery 50 depends upon the battery temperature Tb and the state of charge (SOC) as shown in Figs. 3 and 4. Even when the charge-discharge electric power Wb is less than the idling reference value $Wr1$ immediately after the release of the accelerator, the charge-discharge
10 electric power Wb may increase to the level that is not less than the idling reference value $Wr1$ but is still less than the fuel supply shutoff reference value $Wr2$ with the variation in input restriction Win . In this case, the control of idling
15 the engine 22 starts in the process of gradually lowering the revolution speed Ne of the engine 22. In the case where the charge-discharge electric power Wb increases to the level that is not less than the fuel supply shutoff reference value $Wr2$
20 with the variation in input restriction Win , the control of shutting off the fuel supply to the engine 22 starts in the process of gradually lowering the revolution speed Ne of the engine 22. This arrangement effectively prevents the battery 50 from being charged with excessive electric power against the variation in input restriction Win of the battery 50.

25 As described above, the hybrid vehicle 20 of the embodiment compares the charge-discharge electric power Wb of the battery 50 with the idling reference value $Wr1$ and with

the fuel supply shutoff reference value Wr_2 , which are set on the basis of the input restriction Win of the battery 50, in response to the release of the accelerator. Based on the results of the comparison, the hybrid vehicle 20 changes over the control mode among the ordinary state varying control to gradually lower the revolution speed Ne of the engine 22 with the torque output of the engine 22, the idling state varying control to gradually lower the revolution speed Ne of the engine 22 while idling the engine 22, and the fuel supply shutoff state varying control to shut off the fuel supply to the engine 22. This arrangement effectively prevents the battery 50 from being charged with excessive electric power. When the charge-discharge electric power Wb is less than the idling reference value Wr_1 , the ordinary state varying control is carried out to smoothly lower the revolution speed Ne of the engine 22 and to ensure a quick response to the driver's subsequent step-on action of the accelerator pedal 83. In this case, the fuel supply to the engine 22 continues, so that there is no potential torque shock due to the stop of fuel supply to the engine 22. When the charge-discharge electric power Wb is not less than the idling reference value Wr_1 but is less than the fuel supply shutoff reference value Wr_2 , the idling state varying control is carried out to smoothly lower the revolution speed Ne of the engine 22 and to reduce the generated power by the motor $MG1$. This effectively prevents the battery 50 from being charged with excessive electric power, while

ensuring a relatively quick response to the driver's subsequent step-on action of the accelerator pedal 83. In this case, the fuel supply to the engine 22 still continues, so that there is no potential torque shock due to the stop of fuel supply to the engine 22. When the charge-discharge electric power W_b is not less than the fuel supply shutoff reference value W_{r2} , the fuel supply shutoff state varying control is carried out to effectively prevent the battery 50 from being charged with excessive electric power.

10 The hybrid vehicle 20 of the embodiment gradually lowers the target revolution speed N_e^* of the engine 22 by the rate process, when the charge-discharge electric power W_b is less than the fuel supply shutoff reference value W_{r2} . The rate process is, however, not essential, but another technique may be applied to lower the target revolution speed N_e^* of the engine 22.

20 The hybrid vehicle 20 of the embodiment carries out the ordinary state varying control on the condition that the charge-discharge electric power W_b is less than the idling reference value W_{r1} , the idling state varying control on the condition that the charge-discharge electric power W_b is not less than the idling reference value W_{r1} but is less than the fuel supply shutoff reference value W_{r2} , and the fuel supply shutoff state varying control on the condition that the charge-discharge electric power W_b is not less than the fuel supply shutoff reference value W_{r2} . One modified procedure

may select the control mode among the ordinary state varying control, the idling state varying control, and the fuel supply shutoff state varying control, based on the degree of variation in charge-discharge electric power W_b that has reached the idling reference value W_{r1} . In this modified arrangement, another speed reduction control routine shown in Fig. 8 is executed, in place of the speed reduction control routine of Fig. 2. The processing of steps S100 to S140 and the processing of and after step S160 in this modified speed reduction control routine of Fig. 8 are identical with those of the same step numbers in the speed reduction control routine of Fig. 2. The different flow of processing at steps of and after S142 is thus briefly described here.

Referring to the flowchart of Fig. 8, when the charge-discharge electric power W_b has reached the idling reference value W_{r1} (step S142), the modified speed reduction control routine subtracts the previous charge-discharge electric power W_b (expressed as Previous W_b) used in the previous cycle of this routine from the current charge-discharge electric power W_b to calculate an electric power variation ΔW (step S144). The routine compares the calculated electric power variation ΔW with threshold values W_{r3} and W_{r4} (step S146). The threshold value W_{r3} is used as a criterion to determine the continuance or termination of the ordinary state varying control and has a relatively small setting. The threshold value W_{r4} is used as a criterion to

determine the execution or non-execution of the fuel supply shutoff state varying control and has a greater setting than the setting of the threshold value $Wr3$. The electric power variation ΔW represents a variation in charge-discharge electric power Wb against the frequency of activation of the speed reduction control routine and may be regarded as a differential value of the charge-discharge electric power Wb at the extreme. The comparison between the electric power variation ΔW and the threshold values $Wr3$ and $Wr4$ accordingly determines whether the variation in charge-discharge electric power Wb is moderate or abrupt. When the electric power variation ΔW is less than the threshold value $Wr3$, it is expected that the charge-discharge electric power Wb has only a small variation and will not abruptly reach or exceed the fuel supply shutoff reference value $Wr2$. The continuance of the ordinary state varying control is accordingly recommended. When the electric power variation ΔW is not less than the threshold value $Wr4$, on the other hand, it is expected that the charge-discharge electric power Wb has a remarkably large variation and will soon reach or exceed the fuel supply shutoff reference value $Wr2$. The immediate execution of the fuel supply shutoff state varying control is thus recommended. This modified procedure changes over the control mode, based on the results of the comparison. When the electric power variation ΔW is less than the threshold value $Wr3$, the routine sets the target torque Te^* corresponding to the target revolution speed Ne^* (step S160)

and executes the ordinary state varying control to gradually lower the revolution speed N_e of the engine 22 with the torque output from the engine 22. When the electric power variation ΔW is not less than the threshold value $Wr3$ but is less than the threshold value $Wr4$, the routine sends an instruction for idling the engine 22 at the target revolution speed N_e^* to the engine ECU 24 (step S220) and executes the idling state varying control to gradually lower the revolution speed N_e of the engine 22 while idling the engine 22. When the electric power variation ΔW is not less than the threshold value $Wr4$, the routine shuts off the fuel supply to the engine 22, sets the value '0' to the torque command $Tm1^*$ of the motor MG1 (steps S230 and S240), and executes the fuel supply shutoff state varying control to shut off the fuel supply to the engine 22.

The modified speed reduction control routine of Fig. 8 executes the fuel supply shutoff state varying control when the charge-discharge electric power Wb becomes not less than the fuel supply shutoff reference value $Wr2$, in the same manner as the speed reduction control routine of Fig. 2.

The hybrid vehicle executes this modified speed reduction control routine (Fig. 8) to change over the control mode among the ordinary state varying control, the idling state varying control, and the fuel supply shutoff state varying control according to the degree of the variation in charge-discharge electric power Wb that has reached the idling reference value $Wr1$ set on the basis of the input restriction Win . The control

mode is changed over, based on the estimation of the charge-discharge electric power W_b in the immediate future. This modified arrangement thus effectively prevents the battery 50 from being charged with excessive electric power.

5 The ordinary state varying control and the idling state varying control smoothly lower the revolution speed N_e of the engine 22, while ensuring a sufficiently or relatively quick response to the driver's subsequent step-on action of the accelerator pedal 83.

10 The modified speed reduction control routine (Fig. 8) changes over the control mode to the fuel supply shutoff state varying control when the charge-discharge electric power W_b is not less than the fuel supply shutoff reference value W_{r2} . Another possible modification may not compare the
15 charge-discharge electric power W_b with the fuel supply shutoff reference value W_{r2} . This modified procedure changes over the control mode, based on the results of the comparison between the charge-discharge electric power W_b and the idling reference value W_{r1} and the subsequent comparison between the electric
20 power variation ΔW and the threshold values W_{r3} and W_{r4} .

The modified speed reduction control routine (Fig. 8) compares the electric power variation ΔW with the threshold values W_{r3} and W_{r4} . This routine selects the ordinary state
25 varying control when the electric power variation ΔW is less than the threshold value W_{r3} , the idling state varying control when the electric power variation ΔW is not less than the

threshold value $Wr3$ but is less than the threshold value $Wr4$, and the fuel supply shutoff state varying control when the electric power variation ΔW is not less than the threshold value $Wr4$. Another possible modification may compare the electric power variation ΔW with only the threshold value $Wr4$. This modified procedure executes the idling state varying control when the electric power variation ΔW is less than the threshold value $Wr4$, while executing the fuel supply shutoff varying control when the electric power variation ΔW is not less than the threshold value $Wr4$. Namely the ordinary state varying control is terminated when the charge-discharge electric power Wb becomes not less than the idling reference value $Wr1$.

In the hybrid vehicle 20 of the embodiment, the power of the motor MG2 is subjected to gear change by the reduction gear 35 and is output to the ring gear shaft 32a. In one possible modification shown as a hybrid vehicle 120 of Fig. 9, the power of the motor MG2 may be output to another axle (that is, an axle linked with wheels 64a and 64b), which is different from an axle connected with the ring gear shaft 32a (that is, an axle linked with the wheels 63a and 63b).

In the hybrid vehicle 20 of the embodiment, the power of the engine 22 is output via the power distribution integration mechanism 30 to the ring gear shaft 32a functioning as the drive shaft linked with the drive wheels 63a and 63b. In another possible modification of Fig. 10, a hybrid vehicle 220 may have a pair-rotor motor 230, which has an inner rotor

232 connected with the crankshaft 26 of the engine 22 and an
outer rotor 234 connected with the drive shaft for outputting
the power to the drive wheels 63a, 63b and transmits part of
the power output from the engine 22 to the drive shaft while
5 converting the residual part of the power into electric power.

The embodiment discussed above is to be considered in
all aspects as illustrative and not restrictive. There may
be many modifications, changes, and alterations without
departing from the scope or spirit of the main characteristics
10 of the present invention. The scope and spirit of the present
invention are indicated by the appended claims, rather than
by the foregoing description.

Industrial Applicability

15 The technique of the invention is applicable to,
automobile and other manufacturing industries.